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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the proposition that languages may differ in their potential for non-sexist usage, and that the structure of a language, in particular the gender system, affects the nature of the linguistic response to changing social attitudes regarding sex roles. A brief historical survey of gender and sex-marking is followed by a review of the situation in several languages including contemporary English. It is concluded that the structure of a language is one factor influencing the rate of linguistic change in response to social change and that, while the sex-based system of English does not present a serious obstacle to language change, the grammatical gender of some languages may constitute an impediment to change. It is also hypothesized that, as pressures for social change make speakers aware of the sexist implications of the gender system, the purely grammatical and the sex-based criteria will come into conflict, introducing instability into the system. Data from several languages are presented indicating the presence of such instability, especially in words denoting professions and other social roles, and some tentative predictions are made regarding future developments. (Author/AMH)

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Sexism, Grammatical Gender, and Social Change

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Linguistic reform has played an important role in the fight against sexism in contemporary society. Earlier movements in favor of women's rights and equality were also characterized by efforts to change linguistic usage. Now, as in the past, the value and efficacy of such attempts are questioned by both supporters and opponents of feminism, who invoke the traditional view that social change must precede language change. Few, if any, proponents of linguistic reform are naive enough to believe that eliminating sexist language would eliminate sexism in our society, but they are keenly aware that, as Thorne and Henley (1975:29) remind us, 'language and society cannot be so easily separated. Speech is a form of action, not simply a reflection of underlying social processes.'

In this paper, I will examine the proposition that languages may differ in their potential for non-sexist usage, i.e., that the structure of a language, in particular the gender system, may affect the nature of the linguistic response to changing social attitudes about sex roles. I have selected gender as an appropriate category because it is a widespread phenomenon in language and often reflects a society's classification by sex.

I do not propose to discuss here the claim that some languages are more sexist than others, or that languages with formal gender systems may reflect a more sexist society than those without gender. I think it is well documented that most contemporary societies are sexist and that languages may reflect this in a variety of ways.

Gender as a grammatical category. A survey of the definitions and views of gender in contemporary linguistics reveals that it is a common, but by no means universal, feature of languages. It is usually defined as a system of noun classification, with the gender or class of a noun being specified in the lexicon. The gender classification of nouns may motivate pronominal reference, adjectival concord within and external to the noun phrase and, in some cases, concord with the verb. It should be noted that formal noun classification without concord of some kind does not exist. Fodor (1959:2) states that the 'principle of congruence' is the criterion for the existence of gender. Congruence, or concord, involves one element of invariable gender, usually the noun, and one or more elements of variable gender which agree with it. Although nouns may be classified as belonging to one or more specific genders or classes, they are not themselves always formally marked for gender. They are frequently described as possessing inherent gender.

A distinction is usually made between paradigmatic and syntagmatic gender concord (Miranda 1975:199). In the former, also referred to as anaphoric concord, lexical items agree with nouns only when they replace them. In contrast, syntagmatic concord involves agreement between nouns and items which co-occur with them.

The basis of gender classification is commonly described as either natural or grammatical. Natural gender classification is

based on semantic features of nouns. Sex is often a criterion for gender classification, but many other bases are found, such as the distinction between animate and inanimate beings. With grammatical gender, the class of a large number of nouns is not based on semantic criteria; it may be predictable from the phonetic shape of nouns, or it may appear to be arbitrary. Some writers, Miranda for example, prefer the term anomalous gender to describe this kind of classification, while others (e.g., McCawley 1968) refer to it as lexical gender. These systems are frequently mixed, containing some nouns classified on a semantic basis.

Although gender is far from being a universal phenomenon among languages, Greenberg (1966:93-96) does posit a number of universals valid for languages with gender. They highlight its peripheral nature with respect to other grammatical categories, and may help explain why it appears to be highly susceptible to change.

Greenberg's universals state that languages with gender always have the category of number (universal 36), and that 'A language never has more gender categories in non-singular numbers than in the singular' (universal 37). Gender categories in the noun imply gender in the pronoun, and gender in the first person implies its existence in the second or third person, or both (universals 43,44,45). As for gender concord, agreement between

noun and verb is found only where the noun also agrees in number with the verb, and where adjective agreement with the noun exists (universals 31 and 32) Universal 40 states that adjectives which follow the noun express all the inflectional categories of the noun. 'In such cases, the noun may lack overt expression of one or all of these categories.'

In conformity with the primacy of gender in the pronoun indicated above, Miranda (200) states that 'Languages with syntagmatic concord have, as far as I know, paradigmatic concord as well.' Also of interest in regard to universal features of gender is Moravcsik's hypothesis (cited in Baron 1971:120) that 'every language having grammatical gender may optionally pronominalize according to natural gender.'

In accordance with the above, we would expect to find languages with the characteristics indicated in the table on the following page. When, as often happens in the case of nouns denoting animate beings, there is a conflict between the semantic and the grammatical classification, it may be resolved in one of the following ways: the pronoun will follow a natural rather than a grammatical base (e.g. the use of the fem. pronoun elle in French to refer to le professeur 'the teacher', a noun with grammatical masculine gender); modifiers may agree with the natural rather than the grammatical gender (e.g. the use of la médico 'the doctor' in Spanish, using the feminine definite article with a masculine noun to refer to a

Gender systems*

Characteristics	Language with this type of gender
No gender	Chinese, Hungarian
Semantic or natural gender	
Paradigmatic concord only-pronoun	English
Also syntagmatic concord:--	
modifiers within noun phrase;	
also predicate;	
also verbs	Bantu languages?
Grammatical or anomalus gender	
(usually mixed, with semantic basis for some nouns)	
Paradigmatic concord only-pronoun	
Also syntagmatic concord:--	
modifiers within noun phrase;	German
also predicate;	Spanish, French
also verbs	Russian

*This summary is based in large on the universals posited by Greenberg (1966:93-96).

female doctor, in spite of the fact that a feminine noun médica also exists); grammatically feminine nouns which refer to human beings in general may occur with masculine modifiers (e.g., French gens 'people' is treated as a masculine form under certain conditions, although it is the plural of a feminine noun.)

Many languages, including some without a gender system, use derivation to distinguish nouns denoting females from those referring to males. A typical example is the use of agentive suffixes for names of professions. In most cases, as in Eng. poet/poetess, the feminine form is the marked one. This may be related to the prevalent social situation. Unmarked linguistic forms generally correspond to higher frequency; there are more men than women in many professions and, consequently, females are marked both socially and linguistically. The existence of such feminine derivational forms is parallel to the phenomenon of the 'generic' masculine, and one wonders whether the existence of gender in a language exerts some pressure to use these marked forms.

In contrast to this general trend, Iroquois languages are cited as having a generic or unmarked feminine. There are three genders: masculine, feminine-indefinite, and neuter-zoic. The last two can refer to women, with differing connotations. The indefinite use of the feminine is found in formations such as names of instruments, which are formed from a pronoun and a verb (analogous to saying 'one uses it to ...'). However with occupational terms, formed in a similar way, the sex-typing of the job determines the

pronoun used. The term for ironworker is formed with the masculine pronoun, while the Iroquoian term for teacher uses the feminine. Moreover, when indefinite reference is made to a less respected profession, such as waiting on table, the neuter-zoic, which refers to less respected women, is often used instead of the feminine-indefinite. Interestingly, some speakers of Mohawk complain about the increasing tendency among younger people to use the neuter-zoic form to refer to females (Mithun: personal communication).

Although English does not have grammatical gender, an examination of selectional restrictions in English reveals much 'gender-like' agreement. Stanley (1977:50) has pointed out that certain adjectives can only modify nouns denoting females and that the 'principle of pronominal agreement in English operates in terms of sex-specific activities at least as they are traditionally defined ... by our culture' (65-66). This accords with McCawley's observation (1968:134) that 'the various nonsemantic features attached to nouns, for example, ... grammatical gender ..., play no role in selection.' McCawley also rejects the analysis of the word priest as having the semantic marker (Male) in its dictionary entry (see Katz 1966:158), and points out that 'this marker relates solely to factual information as to who current regulations allow to be priests ...' (129). Later, he states that in English choice of pronoun 'depends on one's knowledge of the intended

referent of the noun phrase rather than on the lexical items involved in the antecedent noun phrase' (139).

In his review of Lakoff (1975), McCawley (1976:42) advocates the 'consistent use of he as a "common gender" pronoun...' He claims that this 'would drive out of circulation a he that meant "typically male" ...' Here he seems to have forgotten his own earlier caution (1968:129) that 'disambiguation actually involves not merely linguistic competence but also the language user's factual knowledge ...' The usage of he which he recommends would be at best ambiguous and speakers would tend to disambiguate by interpreting it as a sex-specific he whenever possible.

It may be that the difference between natural and grammatical gender is more profound than it seems. The former may involve the semantic representation of lexical items as well as the speaker's knowledge about the intended referent, whereas the latter may involve formal features attached to nouns which have consequences in the surface structures of sentences. The two types of gender often coexist and reinforce one another but, when they clash, e.g. with nouns denoting human beings, instability results and the consequences may take a number of different forms.

Gender in Indo-European languages. A brief examination of the accounts of gender in Indo-European will help clarify the status of gender in contemporary languages, and indicate some of the

factors which have affected its development. Scholars of Indo-European generally agree that its three-gender system developed out of an earlier two-gender system in which sex was not the basis for classification, but rather a contrast between animate and inanimate. It has been hypothesized that pressure to differentiate between agent and patient when referring to animate nouns led to the separation of the 'masculine' and 'neuter' genders (see Fodor 19-20;32-33).

Beyond these general remarks, scholarly agreement is less evident. Miranda (1975) reviews some of the issues concerning the emergence of gender in Indo-European. He observes (206-07) that in all probability 'the endings for masculine, feminine, and neuter gender had different meanings at an earlier stage, but this does not establish that there was at that time a GENDER SYSTEM based on different semantic criteria.'[1] The endings may have been derivational suffixes.

In discussing the origin of the feminine gender, Miranda cites contemporary evidence from Konkani, an Indo-Aryan language spoken on the west coast of India, in support of Brugmann's theory that a semantic change in some words belonging to the second category of Indo-European nouns initiated the late Indo-European development of sex-based gender. The key word is $g^{w}en\bar{a}$ which, according to Brugmann, underwent a change in meaning from 'child-bearing' to 'woman'. Miranda answers some of the criticism levelled

at this hypothesis by pointing out that a change from an abstract to a specific meaning is common (cf. youth), and that the word for 'woman' has frequently been replaced in linguistic history. He also cites examples from several languages which indicate that it is possible for 'a single lexical item or a couple of items' to change the meaning of a suffix (205-06). Additional support for this possibility is provided by data from Konkani, where semantic change in a neuter noun ĉeḍũ, from 'child' to 'girl', has affected 'not only other nouns and rules of concord, but even the semantics of neuter gender' (209). This has become a second feminine gender, with an age distinction, something like 'young female'.

Miranda suggests that the final separation of masculine and feminine gender in Indo-European may have come about by nouns in the first class denoting females being transferred to the feminine gender; 'then most nouns denoting sexual beings left in the -os class would denote only males' (213). He accounts for the anomalous nature of Indo-European gender by noting that 'semantic shifts are rarely complete ... When the semantic basis of a gender system is or becomes opaque ... it is likely to lead to the use of the phonetic characteristics of the nouns as criteria for the determination of gender in a large part of the vocabulary which would further weaken the semantic ties' (212).

As to the evolution of gender concord, Miranda (200) cites Martinet's theory (1957) that it probably began with paradigmatic concord of the pronoun. This accords with the hierarchy reflected in the universals discussed earlier.

The preceding review of some accounts of the probable origin of gender in Indo-European shows that, from the earliest stages, noun classifications and gender concord have been subject to change; they have appeared and disappeared, merged and split, and the basis of the classification has shifted. Realization of this is fundamental to a consideration of the prospects for future change.

For further indication of the factors influencing gender change, a glance at a few modern Indo-European languages is appropriate. The development of English gender is discussed in relation to contemporary theories of language change by Baron (1971). Old English had a grammatically based three-gender system with agreement of modifiers and anaphoric pronouns in the singular. How did this evolve to the Modern English system, where we find only sex-reference for some anaphoric pronouns? Baron (115) notes the claim of some linguists that pronominal agreement in English is not a feature of nouns but of the speaker's knowledge of extralinguistic factors. However, she points out that 'it is possible to abstract a fully natural gender system which most linguists would agree is "unmarked" for Modern English.[2]

Baron (116-17) cites Traugott's 1969 analysis of Old English nouns as characterized by features of case, animacy and gender. According to this analysis, Old English pronouns may be classified according to the same system as nouns, or by an alternative, semantically motivated one, where only animates are explicitly marked for gender. By early Modern English, Baron posits, this alternative pronominal system had become obligatory and the first system lost. In the transitional period of Middle English, the natural gender system already common for Animate nouns in OE gradually increased in frequency (123). One source of change may well have been pressure from the linguistic system itself. For example, grammatical agreement within the noun phrase was affected by the levelling of unstressed vowels to [ə], which eliminated gender distinctions for many adjectives.

Several theories which attempt to account for changes in the English definite determiner are discussed by Baron. All of them 'suggest a transition period characterized by confusion of grammatical gender' (128-29). She prefers an alternative theory proposed by Jones (1967a,b), according to which nouns did not change gender, but gender became irrelevant to inflections in Late Old English and Early Middle English, so that modifiers marked case only, rather than case and gender.

Baron concludes (138) that: 'Both noun phrase internal and noun phrase external gender underwent change, yet the only causal

connection we may draw is that the loss of grammatical gender in nouns necessarily implied the extension of natural gender in pronominalization.' However, as she has stated earlier (123), 'there is no evidence that the spread of natural gender in anaphoric pronouns necessarily hastens loss of noun phrase interral grammatical gender.'[3]

German, unlike English, has retained a three-gender system which includes both natural and grammatical gender. There is agreement within the noun phrase, as well as in pronominalization. Adjectives used as predicates do not, however, inflect for gender. McCawley (1968:141-42) states that in German 'the anaphoric pronoun always agrees in gender with the head of the antecedent noun phrase ... In the case of nonanaphoric (that is, deictic) pronouns, the choice of gender is always made on the basis of presupposition concerning the intended referent.' To use his example, one might ask Wie heisst sie? 'What is her name?' if a young female enters the room, later refer to her as das Mädchen, a neuter noun, and then use the neuter pronoun es for anaphoric reference. However, one widely used grammar (Lederer 1969:194) qualifies the rule that es is used for neuter nouns designating persons by a note: 'Colloquially, however, das Mädchen is often replaced by the pronoun sie.' Another note explains that Fräulein 'young woman, Miss' is an exception, always being replaced by sie.

French has a two-gender system which is grammatically based; however, most nouns referring to human beings are classified on the basis of sex into the masculine or feminine categories, and a few have 'common gender'. Nouns themselves are not marked consistently for gender, although there are certain phonetic regularities which have an influence in assigning gender to unfamiliar words like loan words (see Tucker 1970 and Baetens Beardsmore 1971). There are also a number of productive derivational suffixes which mark the referent of the noun as female. Within the noun phrase, modifiers generally show grammatical agreement with the noun. In the case of predicates, when conflict arises between grammatical gender and sex of referent, the issue may be avoided by deictic pronominalization according to sex. The grammatically masculine expression le nouveau professeur 'the new teacher' may refer to a woman but, as Lyons (1968:286) observes: 'Neither Le nouveau professeur est beau (which necessarily refers to a man) nor *Le nouveau professeur est belle (which is ungrammatical) is possible. The "conflict" is resolved with a sentence like Elle est belle, le nouveau professeur ("She is beautiful, the new teacher").'

Agreement of common gender nouns in French depends on the sex of the referent. However, masculine agreement predominates, extending even to nouns of feminine grammatical gender which denote human beings of either sex, e.g. personne 'person'. The collective noun gens 'people', described as a masculine plural

of a feminine singular noun, requires feminine agreement when preceded by a gender-marking adjective: les vieilles gens 'old people'. The expression les vieilles gens sont malheureux 'old people are unhappy', with a feminine adjective preceding the noun and a masculine one in the predicate, is described by the 1956 Dictionnaire Usuel Quillet Flammarion (580) as 'correct but barbarous'.

Numerous examples of violations of gender concord in the predicate are cited in Durand's study of spoken French in the Parisian region, carried out in the 1930's. These most frequently involve the use of masculine adjectives with pronouns and nouns which clearly refer to females, as well as with grammatically feminine inanimate nouns: quand j'ai vu ça j'étais fou 'when I saw that I was crazy' (said by a woman) (Durand 1936:5).

Other trends in popular French include a tendency to realign feminine words designating male beings or male functions, e.g. un sentinelle 'a sentry'. Inanimate nouns, on the other hand are often reclassified according to phonetic form, and 'many words beginning with vowel sounds tend to be pulled into the feminine gender' (Baetens Beardsmore 1971:143). As a result, words like ouvrage 'work', élastique 'elastic band' may be treated as feminines.

The situation in French is therefore quite complex and apparently unstable. It is further complicated by a long tradition of normative grammar as well as by the differences between spoken and written French.

Spanish, like French, has a two-gender system with most animate nouns classified on the basis of sex, but with grammatical gender for inanimate nouns. Unlike French, however, many nouns are formally marked for gender; for nouns, as for adjectives, the most common endings are -o for masculine and -a for feminine. A number of agentive suffixes also carry these markings: enfermero/enfermera 'nurse', traductor/traductora 'translator'. In addition, Spanish has common gender nouns, used with masculine or feminine modifiers depending on the sex-referencé (e.g. estudiante 'student'). Grammatical gender concord is required within the noun phrase and in predicates, as well as in pronominalization, but it should be noted that the subject pronoun is often omitted in Spanish. In the plural, unless all the persons referred to are female, agreement is with the masculine.

When conflict exists in Spanish between formal grammatical gender and the sex of the referent, the resulting instability give rise to a variety of phenomena. There is some social and regional variation, with an apparent general tendency to prefer natural or sex concord. One well known grammarian (Gili Gaya 1973:30) notes the frequent vacillation between grammatical and semantic concord. As in French, with nouns that can refer to humans of either sex, but are classified grammatically as feminine, this vacillation ends up favoring the 'generic masculine'. A recent newspaper column describing conversations between the author and a group of young

Spaniards, illustrates some of the vagaries of gender in contemporary Spanish.[4] The group of males and females is referred to in one place as estos jóvenes 'these young people', using a common gender noun and a masculine modifier; elsewhere, we find gente 'people', a feminine singular collective noun, with a plural verb and a feminine singular adjective: son gente en otro tiempo comprometida 'they are people formerly (politically) committed'. However, later in the same sentence, two masculine plural modifiers are used to describe the same feminine noun: desengañados y deseosos de emplear la experiencia 'disabused and anxious to use the experience'.

Both Spanish and French, then, exhibit instability in the lexical classification of human nouns, and in the gender concord system. However, there are some important differences between them, such as the multiplicity of feminine endings in French, and the typical omission of the subject pronoun in Spanish, which may influence the direction of future change.

A brief look at Papiamentu, a creole language spoken in the Netherlands West Indies, indicates what may happen to gender in a language which has undergone drastic change. Papiamentu is an Iberian-based creole, therefore derived from a language with a two-gender system. Grammatical gender has disappeared, through phonological reduction of many nouns and levelling of adjective endings. As a result, most Papiamentu nouns denoting humans are sex-neutral. There are some exceptions such as the pair rei 'king',

reina 'queen', and some kinship terms which are lexically marked for the sex of the referent. As there is only one third person singular pronoun, e, used for females and males, we can say that Papiamentu has no gender agreement of any kind. When the sense requires it, the words homber 'man and muhé 'woman' are added to a noun to indicate the sex of the referent: ruman 'sibling', ruman muhé 'sister', and ruman homber 'brother'. The addition of these forms is often unnecessary because potential ambiguity is resolved by the context. One might ask, however, whether there will be greater use of homber and muhé if women begin to enter in large numbers into jobs traditionally held by men.

Before turning to a discussion of the potential for change in specific languages, I will summarize some of the factors which seem to have influenced the evolution of gender in the past:

- phonetic change, such as the levelling of unstressed vowels in English which led to loss of inflections;
- functional reanalysis of forms (see Bynon 1977:99-104), such as the reinterpretation of grammatically feminine nouns as masculine in French;
- tendencies already existing in the language, e.g., the tendency toward a natural gender classification already existed in Old English, and the two systems of grammatical and sex gender usually coincided for animate nouns;
- syntactic factors, such as the possible relation of word

order to loss of case endings and grammatical gender in English;

- semantic change, such as the posited change in meaning of $\underline{g^{w}en\bar{a}}$ in Indo-European, or the change from 'child' to 'girl' in Konkani discussed by Miranda.
- analogical pattern extension and levelling, such as Martinet's (1957) explanation for the spread of gender concord in Indo-European.

Most of the above, with the possible exception of the semantic changes, involve internal adjustments in the linguistic structure. External factors include foreign influence through borrowing and bilingualism, cultural changes, and the role of social attitudes and changing social structures.

Occupational terms: the potential for change. The following discussion and speculation about the potential for change to non-sexist occupational terms in some of the languages discussed is based on consideration of the above factors, as well as on the linguistic universals referred to earlier. I have also kept in mind the discussion by Weinreich et al (1968) of the problems which a theory of language change should address. The tentative nature of any conclusions offered should be emphasized; there is a great need for more contemporary data and for further analysis of existing data.

I will not dwell on English, which will receive considerable attention at this conference, but I will include a few remarks about English which are pertinent to my discussion of other languages. Current usage in English reflects the sexist nature of our society in a number of ways, including the so-called 'generic' use of he, and the pervasive masculine association of most unmarked nouns denoting persons, discussed here by DeStefano et al. Martyna's work suggests that changes may be occurring in the everyday use of pronouns, and the number of proposals in circulation for linguistic reform indicates that, while usage is sexist, the structure of contemporary English does not in itself present a serious obstacle to change. As Stanley (1977:74) points out, 'Removing sexist words, phrases, comparisons, jokes and the like is Not changing the English language. We recommend alternatives already extant in the language and in use among people.' To cite one example, we know that the use of they as a singular sex-indefinite pronoun has, in spite of prescriptive grammarians, a long and honorable tradition (see Bodine 1975). The lexicon, which is the principal area targeted for linguistic reform in English, is highly susceptible to change.

Some disagreement exists among feminists over whether to favor sex-neutral terms in semantic areas like occupations, or whether to insist on sex-specific terms where the sex of the referent is known. The guidelines adopted by some publishers and

by the Department of Labor in the 1977 version of the Dictionary of Occupational Titles have opted for sex-neutral terms, such as photographer to replace cameraman. Such terms are relatively accessible in English, and I think that usage will continue to move in this direction.

Those who would have us use chairwoman and chairman instead of chairperson remind us that sex-neutral forms often take on sex-specific connotations, for example chairperson used for women only and chairman continuing in use for men. (See Malkiel 1957-1958 for a discussion of the phenomenon he calls 'hypercharacterization'.) However, sex-specific terms for women have historically assumed a pejorative connotation, and we would still be faced with the need for a term for 'generic' plural reference. Using a 'generic feminine' like chairwomen for indefinite plural reference would have some shock-value, but would probably stand little chance of success.

The campaign for non-sexist language use in English is, I believe, a worthwhile and not entirely hopeless complement to the fight for a non-sexist society. At the very least, it is a way to raise people's consciousness, and is in itself a form of social action.

The situation in some other languages seems much more difficult for those who would like to eliminate sexist language usage. In French, the problem of finding appropriate feminine designations for professions traditionally closed to women was recognized

and discussed early in the century. Albert Dauzat (1908:67) cites a letter sent to a newspaper some years earlier by a woman who called for an assembly to 'feminize the French language'. Dauzat (67-70) discusses the varied reception of some 'conscious creations' in the popular language and among writers: avocate 'lawyer' was resisted, although it already existed with a more figurative meaning; doctoresse 'doctor' is first documented in the 15th century and was used by Rousseau, but its use in everyday language is more recent.

In his historical grammar of French, Nyrop (1903:300-01) notes that social progress calls for new feminine agentives and he cites the hesitation of many users of the language in this area. New words like peintresse 'painter' are, he says, constantly being coined, and some are sure to remain. In addition, some masculine nouns which designate traditionally male occupations are now used with masculine concord for both sexes, e.g., écrivain 'writer'. Other nouns have common gender and can be used with either feminine or masculine modifiers according to the sex of the referent, e.g. une/ un artiste 'an artist' (297-98). Nyrop's examples show that it is relatively easy to coin feminine forms but that they are not always adopted. Voltaire, for example, used the term professeuse 'teacher', but his usage was not followed.

Writing on the formation of the feminine in modern French, Stehli (1953) pinpoints the large number of possibilities for forming

feminine agentives in French as a prime source of difficulty. Many of these suffixes have acquired pejorative connotations and are not useful to describe new social roles. Stehli (12) notes a tendency in difficult situations to use a masculine noun with the feminine article, as in la chef 'the boss', la ministre 'the minister', thus in effect creating a new common gender noun (or at least a quasi-common gender noun as he does not say whether other modifiers are feminine or masculine). One way of forming feminines is to use the word femme 'woman' either preceding or following the noun, analogous to saying 'woman lawyer' in English. Stehli's investigation indicates, however (13), that most speakers prefer a simple feminine form when one is available. The discomfort felt by speakers when sex and grammatical gender conflict may also be avoided, as we have seen, via circumlocution: elle gagne sa vie comme professeur 'she earns her living as a teacher'.

Some women reject the use of special feminine forms, pointing out that they compare women only to other women, not to all members of the profession: Mme. X est une excellente doctoresse says essentially 'Mrs. X is an excellent woman doctor'. Brunot (1936:90) exclaimed that these women would not be satisfied unless assimilation were complete: 'They simply want to have men's titles', as in the expression Mlle le Docteur ... According to Stehli (16), a more recent wave of feminists believe that the feminine forms are essential to combat the invisibility of women. The controversy is similar to

the one in English, but the resolution is more difficult because of the barrier of gender concord. The 1956 edition of the French dictionary Dictionnaire Usuel Quillet Flammarion gives both Mme. la Doctoresse X and Mme. le Docteur X as acceptable titles, thus sanctioning a usage considered 'shocking' by earlier writers (see Durand 1936:24).

Examples of usage cited by these writers, such as une seule médecin auxiliare and une seule médecin chef 'only one assistant physician' and 'only one head physician' (Brunot:90), suggests the possible future extension of the use of traditionally masculine nouns as common gender or sex-neutral terms with sex-specific concord. Many adjectives already have a single form, especially in the spoken language, a fact which would make such a change less drastic. Special feminine forms already in general use, like avocate, might be retained, but agentive suffixes likely to acquire pejorative connotation could be avoided in favor of the unmarked form, converted into a common gender noun: peintre 'painter' (peintresse is rare), poète 'poet' (eliminating the belittling term poétesse), etc. Note that the phonetic form should pose no obstacle; although the -eur ending is usually associated with masculine gender in agentives such as auteur, there are many inanimate nouns ending in -eur which are feminine gender, e.g. couleur 'color'.

Third person pronominal reference in French is already basically sex-specific, so no modification is called for here. On the whole,

the usage suggested does not really involve language change, but capitalizes on already existing tendencies.

Even assuming adoption of this usage, the problem presented by the generic masculine in the singular, and its use in the plural for groups of males and females, seems to have no practical solution at the present time. Gender agreement is not likely to disappear completely, so male domination of this region of the semantic space will probably continue. The definite article and demonstrative are sex-neutral in the plural and with many singular nouns, and especially in the spoken language, many adjectives are not marked for gender, but there is no sign of the disappearance of gender-marked forms for common words such as bons and bonnes 'good'.[5] It would seem, therefore, that the requirements of gender agreement in contemporary French will block non-sexist linguistic usage in this area, and that French speakers interested in reforming their language will have to concentrate on the lexicon and on exploiting the tendencies toward common gender nouns and invariable adjectives which already exist.

Following a study by Hampares (1976) of dictionary treatment of agentive forms in Spanish, a former student of mine undertook a similar review of French dictionaries published in the 1960's.[6] Her findings were parallel to those of Hampares: the dictionaries were inconsistent in their assignment of gender to these words, both internally and across dictionaries. For example, some words in

-iste of potentially common gender were listed as masculine only by one or more of the dictionaries: one dictionary gave zoologiste 'zoologist' as masculine but listed chimiste 'chemist' as common gender. For words in -eur, with regular feminizing suffixes, the inconsistency was even greater: auteur 'author' is listed as masculine only by three of four dictionaries surveyed, while éditeur 'editor' has the feminine counterpart éditrice in three volumes. Interestingly, the one dictionary which gives a feminine form for auteur, provides only a masculine for éditeur, and none gives a feminine for ingénieur 'engineer'. Treatment of words of potentially common gender pronounced with a final consonant, but written with a final -e, such as juge 'judge', critique 'critic', bibliothécaire 'librarian', showed similar inconsistencies, as did other groups with potentially readily available feminine forms. Where all dictionaries recognized the existence of female forms for lawyers (avocate) and grocers (épicière) none recognized women as surgeons (chirurgienne), and only one thought to cite female assassins (assassine). Some gave the now outdated definition of 'wife of' for certain feminine agentives, or described them as denoting a less prestigious variant of the same profession. One conclusion to be drawn is that feminists should bring pressure on lexicographers to be more consistent and up-to-date. (Or they might become lexicographers themselves; I note that two mono-lingual French dictionaries consulted listed lexicographe as a common gender word.)

In this regard, it will be interesting to see whether and when all the new 'official' occupational titles in English will appear in our dictionaries.

Spanish, as we have seen, has a fairly consistent sex-based gender marking for nouns denoting persons and especially for names of professions. However, there are also many common gender words, some of which end in -o or, more frequently, -a (artista 'artist', soprano 'soprano'), as well as words whose endings seem to contradict their gender classification (el guardia 'the guard'). Because of the structure of contemporary Spanish, I would predict that sex-specific reference will be generalized and that more new feminine forms will be created by using an -a ending with words now ending only in -o. This will compete with the practice of using 'masculine' forms as common gender terms. There is precedent for both la médica and la médico 'doctor', and both are encountered in contemporary usage, with the latter apparently being preferred in Spain. It is difficult to predict whether these traditional masculines will become true common gender nouns and take all their modifiers according to sex reference.

Dialect variation will probably continue, based on the alternatives existing in the language. It is hoped that social pressure will at least discourage the widespread use of forms like poetisa 'poetess'; as in other languages, they have pejorative connotations in Spanish.

For Spanish, as for French, I see no real escape from the so-called 'generic' masculine, especially in the plural to designate groups of males and females. In Spanish, it is likely that the relatively infrequent use of personal pronouns as subjects will have an effect on future developments in gender. As there seems to be little evidence of a general weakening of gender concord, the absence of the third person pronoun may strengthen sex-based concord in the predicate. (When, for example, ella 'she' is absent, only the adjective ending in es alta 'she is tall' indicates that reference is made to a female.)

It is noteworthy that the concern over the form of feminine agentives in Spanish also dates back to an earlier period and that, as in France, the earlier preference among women seems to have been to use the 'masculine' form. Julio Casares (1947:302-306), writing on 'Feminism misunderstood', mentions the early approval by the Spanish Academy of such forms as médica, and of the coining of a whole series of words such as abogada, and catedrática 'university professor'. However, he takes the writer Pardo Bazán to task for having called herself 'catedrático', and states (303) that the rules of agreement 'which constitute one of the most solid pillars of the language cannot be demolished overnight.'[7] He finds la catedrático 'impossible to swallow' and believes that both sexes would reject the use of the masculine article el to refer to women. Casares insists on sex-differentiated terms

because a woman exercising a profession is 'different' from a man in that profession. Smart female poets will be content with poetisa just as an actress is with actriz; they will not try to 'take advantage of the prestige won by the opposite sex' by taking over their titles (306). It has already been noted that preferred usage in Spain currently corresponds to the one Casares deplored, at least for médico and abogado, if not for catedrático.

As indicated earlier, the 1976 study by Hampares suggests that lexicographers have not recognized the existence of females in many professions, so Spanish-speaking feminists would also do well to look closely at their dictionaries.

A report on developments in Russain gender is provided by Rothstein (1973). Russian has three genders, with many nouns designating humans possessing common gender. The agreement of these depends on the sex of the referent. After 1917 there was a move to create parallel feminine forms for words denoting professions. 'Gradually, however, many of the feminine terms were replaced by their masculine counterparts' (461). Today, the masculine appears in official usage, and there are conflicting attitudes towards the use of the marked feminine forms. Rothstein (462) posits that some personal nouns are marked for masculine gender alone, but others are marked for both grammatical gender and sex reference. In the first group, the masculine forms will designate both males and females; some people, however, appear to be moving

these nouns into the common gender category where agreement is by sex reference. In Russian, gender agreement includes the preterite of verbs; verb agreement is optionally either according to gender or sex, adjective agreement is by gender if unambiguous, otherwise by sex reference, and anaphoric pronoun reference usually follows the sex of the referent. Russian thus seems to be undergoing developments similar to what is happening elsewhere where the feminine agentives are yielding to the unmarked form used as a common gender term.

In conclusion, a survey of gender in some Indo-European languages indicates that this grammatical category has frequently been subject to pressures from extra-linguistic sources, as well as to internal language pressures. A lexically marked category with little or no repercussion in the syntax, the formal marking of items referring to females has had a complex history, characterized by many semantic changes. In her article on feminine agentives in Romance languages, Connors (1971:598) concludes that 'as the socially marked category, women in public life, becomes gradually less marked (i.e., as women become more and more common in traditionally "masculine" occupations), it gradually becomes less, rather than more, appropriate to distinguish sex morphologically.' Social pressure can presumably produce considerable change in language use in this area, but the potential for change

appears to be limited by the structure of languages with formal gender concord. Even here, however, tendencies already existing in the spoken language can be exploited and expanded. I have suggested earlier that gender will probably not disappear in the languages examined in the foreseeable future. But we do not really know what effect a concerted conscious effort on the part of many people might have.

My final remarks will be of a programmatic nature. I believe that predictions regarding changes in sexist language usage can have a value beyond the immediate interest in social and linguistic equity or in the grammatical category of gender per se. Scientists concerned about the inaccuracy of predictions in some fields have pointed to the need for a study of the predictive process itself, and noted that predictions in the social sciences do not usually lend themselves to such a study.[8] Predictions about specific language changes may be an exception. However, before our predictions regarding changes in sexist usage can be relevant in a broader context, we need to refine our knowledge about the present situation. To do so, we need empirical studies of many languages, not just English and a few Indo-European languages, to determine what is happening to gender stystems. Data do of course exist in descriptive grammars for many languages, although they are frequently not explicit enough on this point. We also need to continue to develop appropriate techniques to survey usage and

attitudes and measure changes over time, drawing on work in psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics where appropriate. Martyna's work with pronoun usage in English provides one example of how experimental techniques can illuminate the dynamic state of language at a particular moment. Finally, we need more historical and analytical studies like those of Baron, Bodine and Connors to trace the development of usage under different social influences.

Hoijer (1964:459) observes that 'when a group undergoes rapid change in its non-linguistic culture, linguistic change may similarly increase in tempo.' We are undeniably living in a time of great social change, and a reappraisal of the traditional social roles of women and men is a prominent feature of many cultures. May we not, therefore, look forward to the reduction and eventual elimination of sexist usage through social pressure on their languages?

1. the 'masculine' endings such as -os appear in nouns referring to a specific person or object, the 'feminine' -ā was probably a collective or abstract ending, and the 'neuter' -om 'often indicated the result of an action (Miranda:202)

2. For a discussion of the phenomenon of feminine and masculine pronominalization of inanimate nouns, see Mathiot 1976.

3. Baron also notes that this does not contradict Greenberg's universal 43, which 'does not distinguish between grammatical and natural gender systems in the pronoun' (115).

4. The examples cited were taken from Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, Torre del Aire. Informaciones, Suplemento de las Artes y las Letras 505. March 30, 1973.

5. See, however, Durand (5) for remarks on the tendency to use invariable forms for adjectives in the predicate.

6. The dictionaries surveyed were:
Cassell's New French-English English-French Dictionary. 1962. New York: Funk and Wagnall; Le Dictionnaire Larousse du française contemporain. 1964. Paris: Librairie Larousse; and Le Petit Pobert - Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française. 1962. Paris: Société du Nouveau Littré.
I have also included some examples from the Dictionnaire Usuel. 1957. Paris: Quillet-Flammarion.

7. Emilia Pardo Bazán (1852-1921), a novelist and critic, was the first woman to hold this university title in Spain. She was a candidate for membership in the Spanish Academy but, despite her obvious merits, was denied admission because of her sex.

8. See Robert Rosen, Space Predictions Completely Wrong. World Issues. vol. 1, no. 1. Oct-Nov 1976, p.7.

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